# People, Process & Bottlenecks

## Achieving Business Value with Marketing Automation

Infodat™ | Net-Results Marketing Automation

## INTRODUCTION

Marketing Automation (MA) is being adopted by hundreds of thousands of companies around the globe to generate more qualified leads for sales and improve return on marketing investments. MA gives you the ability to deliver personalized content and track customer behavior across all digital channels. In this brief, we'll lay out how you can use this technology to widen the choke points in your marketing and sales funnels. You will learn how to increase the percentage of prospects that take the actions you desire, increasing sales velocity and revenue growth.

## AUDIENCE FOR THIS PAPER

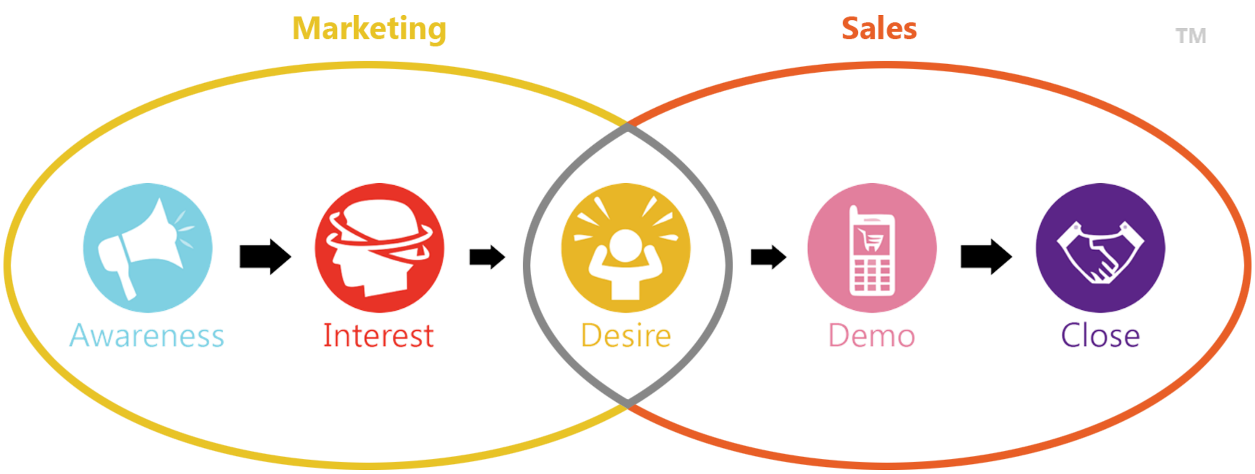
This document is an excellent resource for executives and leaders in both marketing and sales. It will help you to identify and address bottlenecks in your sales pipeline - with the aid of automation and at whatever scale is necessary.

## THE ULTIMATE GOAL

The ultimate goal is to create a Closed Loop Marketing system for your organization. This will allow you to measure the return on your marketing investments and constantly improve your messaging, targeting and processes as you learn from your experiences. It's easier to create a world class closed loop marketing system when it's done in the context of the sales cycle. This will ensure that marketing and sales work together to make this a success.

## THE SALES CYCLE

There are many versions of the “Sales Cycle” that you’ve probably seen over the years. Here’s a version from the Blowfish Group that will help us to demonstrate how MA can help all along the path.




The Sales Cycle

1 - **Awareness** - This is where prospects become aware of your product or service. This first step is critical to sales success. After all, who’s going to buy something they don’t know exists? Traditional ways of creating awareness include advertising, direct marketing and events. There are many ways of creating awareness using MA like email and social media posting. One of the key features of MA is its ability to track customer behavior throughout the sales cycle. This allows you to understand the effectiveness of your initial campaigns so that you can constantly improve to more effectively engage with your target audience.

Here’s a sample report from a campaign

Launch Date : March 23, 2017 8:30 AM

Report Dates : Mar 23, 2017 8:30 AM - Mar 26, 2017 8:30 AM

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sent** | **47,983** | **Clicks** | **46** | **Bounces** | **3,199** |
| | | | **1.9%** | | **6.7%** |
| **Opens** | **2,376** | **Visits** | **41** | **Opt Outs** | **480** |
| | **5%** | | **1.7%** | | **1%** |

You can learn a lot from these reports by comparing these statistics against your own history or industry averages. You can assume that the 2,376 prospects that opened the email are now aware of your product or service. The 46 that clicked on an internal link may be interested and are ready to move to the next step in the process.

2 - **Interest** - You can define a prospect in this category as anyone who as shown any level of interest in your product or service. Interest can be exhibited by clicking on an email link, visiting your website or inbound actions like phone calls, social media inquiries, etc. It's important to follow up with interested leads as quickly and efficiently as possible to keep their interest. MA workflows can be developed to automate this process so that 46 interested parties can receive additional information in a timely manner so that they can be further qualified

3 - **Desire** - This is the most critical stage of the sales cycle in the author's opinion. This is the step in the sales cycle where marketing hands off qualified leads to sales. In order to qualify a lead, you have to know:

- What is the compelling event motivating the interest?
- Is there a budget for the project?
- How is the purchase going to be made?

MA plays a critical role in this step, especially when it's integrated into your CRM. These qualified leads can automatically be assigned to a sales rep based on your own criteria. The assigned sales rep can then be automatically notified when a new lead is assigned. Now the sales rep can see the entire history of the customer journey to date to help them to prepare for the next interaction with the prospect. This automated workflow also lets management track the process and measure the effectiveness of sales. There is a big risk of prospects dropping out of the sales cycle at this point without having an MA tool in place to automate the process.

4 - **Demo** - This step is usually started with a discovery engagement to fully understand the detailed customer requirements. Once the requirements are fully understood, you can differentiate yourself and show the prospect that your product or service can provide whatever they need to satisfy the compelling event. The discovery engagement may not be necessary if you're selling a straight forward product or service. You may be able to jump right into the demo.

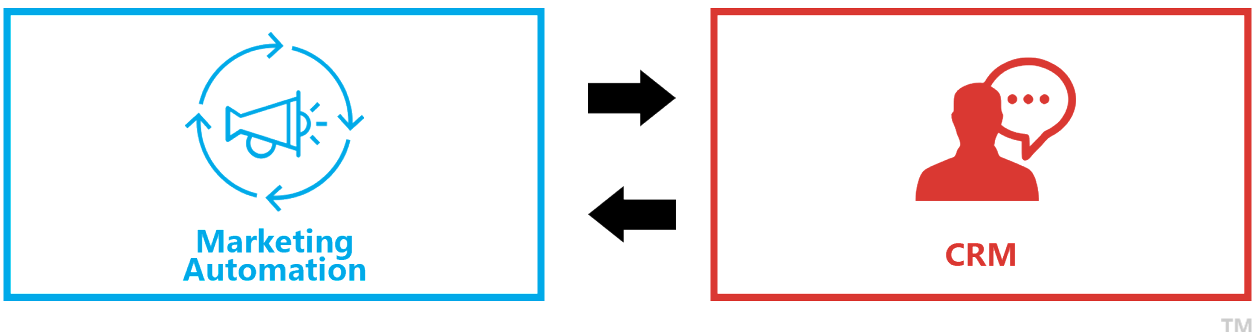
For example, A discovery engagement will be important if you're selling a seamlessly integrated CRM and MA solution to a large organization. There will most likely be requirements specific to that organization that may be missed in a "canned" demo. Being able to create a personalized demo that highlights that organization's specific needs will greatly increase your chance of success. On the other hand, you can probably demonstrate your expertise and past performance during the demo call if you're a real estate agent trying to secure a new listing. The goal will be to start the call with probing questions to fully understand the seller's desired outcome and then tailor your presentation to meet those needs.

In either case, sales has to answer two key questions at this phase. Failure to answer these questions will reduce greatly reduce your chance of success.

1. What will it take to get the business?
2. What is the path to close?

Integration between MA and CRM is important at this phase. All sales activities will (should) be recorded in CRM. This will provide feedback to MA on whether or not to include this prospect or even other contacts from the same company in the next waves of this or other campaigns. The last thing a sales rep wants is for this prospect to be bombarded with new information during this part of the sales cycle so that they don't get distracted or frustrated. Or worse yet, get a call from another sales rep in the same company. This may reduce the prospects confidence in your company and hurt your chances of success. Integration between CRM and MA can help to prevent this from happening.




5 - **Close** - Knowing the path to close is critical in making this phase successful. Almost every company has a different purchasing process. Understanding this process in advance and getting visibility to everyone in the process will help significantly increase your chances of closing the deal. MA can be a very useful resource to sales during this cycle. Sales can research the company and understand who else received information or has shown interest in your product or service. This can help sales from being blindsided by someone who received a different or special offer from your company.

We started by sending 47,983 email messages.  2,376 opened the email message and 46 clicked on a link within the email and visited a landing page. 41 of the 46 also visited the examples website. Looking at data in this manner is often referred to as a "Sales Funnel". How many of the 46 interested prospects actually closed? This is by far the most important metric for management. Understanding the different actions that take place throughout the sales funnel will help you to create a closed loop marketing process that will constantly improve with experience, get a higher return from your marketing investments and generate more revenue.

As you can see, MA is a critical tool in helping to improve conversion rates, generate more qualified leads for sales and to help sales close more deals.

## THE CHALLENGE

While every business is different, sales funnels always share three common elements: **people** that move through a **process** of discovery, evaluation, and purchase, and the various **bottlenecks** in that process where leads dropout.

MA can deliver incredible value when used to remediate the bottlenecks that cause leads to drop out of your sales funnel.

## USE CASE

Let’s look at an example of the “customer journey” at Net-Results.

Let’s pretend that every prospect follows exactly the path we’d like them to. That ideal path looks like this:

1. A prospect receives a promotional email message making them aware of Net-Results
2. The recipient clicks on an internal link and visits our website and becomes interested.
3. The visitor likes what they see and expresses desire so they schedule a Net-Results demonstration qualifying them to become a prospect and hand off to sales
4. Prospect attends a demonstration with sales, loves the product, begins a free trial
5. Prospect schedules an onboarding session (an initial training call) with our Customer Success team
6. Our Prospect attends the onboarding session, loves the product. The demo stage is completed and sales moves on to close the deal.
7. Sales creates a proposal
8. Prospect chooses to buy and becomes a customer

The funnel above represents the ***process***, or customer journey that many of our new customers go through. Of course, there are variations, but it’s not uncommon for new customers to follow this process pretty closely. But things don’t always proceed according to our plans…

## A BOTTLENECK RESTRICTS OUR FUNNEL

Step 5 in the funnel above, the “onboarding session” or initial training call, is one that proves to be fairly critical in our process. Prospects who take this step convert into paying customers at a much higher rate than those who do not.

### A MANUAL PROCESS WITH UNACCEPTABLE RESULTS

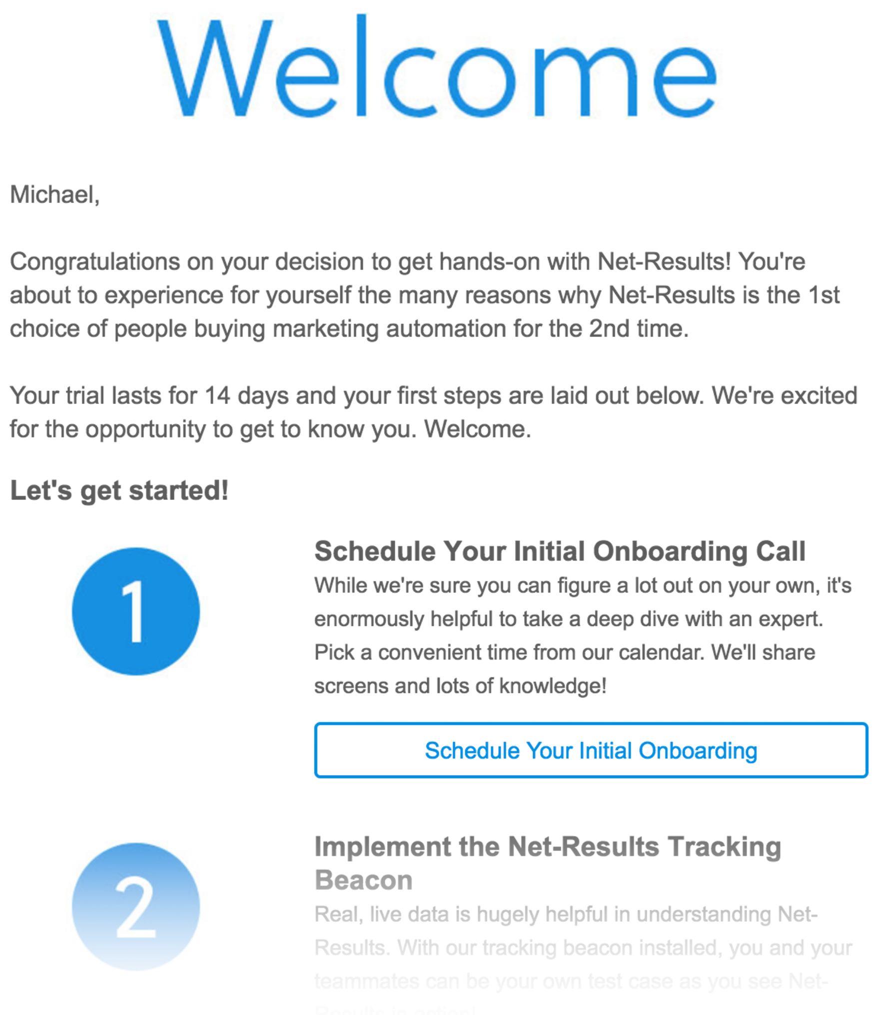
It used to be that, when prospects began a free trial (step 4 in our funnel), a member of our Customer Success team would be notified. They would then email the prospect suggesting some times to get their onboarding scheduled.

This manual email from our Customer Success manager was not always timely (everybody's busy). Some prospects would schedule their onboarding but many would not. Add a manual follow up process that wasn't easy to stay on top of and our funnel had a pretty big leak - a bottleneck that had a very real impact on new revenue.

## AN AUTOMATED SOLUTION THAT DELIVERS ONGOING RESULTS

The solution was fairly straightforward:

1. Get smarter. Our "Welcome" email that is triggered from Net-Results when a free trial is created now makes scheduling the initial training call *step number 1*, the very first thing our prospects need to do in their free trial..



Welcome

Michael,

Congratulations on your decision to get hands-on with Net-Results! You're about to experience for yourself the many reasons why Net-Results is the 1st choice of people buying marketing automation for the 2nd time.

Your trial lasts for 14 days and your first steps are laid out below. We're excited for the opportunity to get to know you. Welcome.

**Let's get started!**

1

**Schedule Your Initial Onboarding Call**

While we're sure you can figure a lot out on your own, it's enormously helpful to take a deep dive with an expert. Pick a convenient time from our calendar. We'll share screens and lots of knowledge!

Schedule Your Initial Onboarding

2

**Implement the Net-Results Tracking Beacon**

Real, live data is hugely helpful in understanding Net-Results. With our tracking beacon installed, you and your teammates can be your own test case as you see Net-Results in action!

This obvious and direct "call to action" works. Many of our free trial prospects schedule their onboarding within minutes of receiving this automated email. But not everyone does…

2. We created a simple, automated workflow in Net-Results to drive the stragglers to schedule their onboarding session…
    - Wait 24 hours from the free trial “Welcome” email. If onboarding not scheduled, send follow up email #1
    - Wait 24 hours. If onboarding still not scheduled, send follow up email #2
    - Wait 24 hours. If onboarding still not scheduled, send a notification to the sales rep the lead is assigned to. That rep can then decide how to proceed.

This simple workflow now operates for us every day, increasing the percentage of prospects that take the actions we desire - actions that lead to revenue.

## THIS REALLY ISN’T THAT HARD

While the solution we implemented is quite simple, the bottleneck it eliminated was very real, as was the revenue we were not generating.

Simplicity is really the point we’re making. By breaking a multi-month sales process down to its individual steps, we were able to identify and isolate an ugly bottleneck.

We’ve seen companies get overwhelmed - unsure of where to begin with automation. Their mistake is to take on too much at once. Rather, we’d advise you to keep it simple...

1. Define the steps in your process/funnel/customer journey
2. Decide which steps are currently causing you the most pain. Prioritize.
3. Use automation (in combination with manual intervention based on common sense) to drive results in this one stage in your process.
4. Return to step 2. Repeat.

## BUT LIFE IS RARELY THAT SIMPLE

Even in the idealized “customer journey” we‘ve used an example in this guide, there are multiple complications…

- Prospects who schedule a demonstration that no-show at the scheduled time
- Prospects who schedule their initial training and fail to attend
- Prospects that get a proposal in-hand and then stop communicating or “go dark”

Each of these represents a leak in our sales funnel. Each can be (and is) addressed with its own automated workflow.

Look at each step in your funnel and find the leaks. Decide what actions would reduce the leakage at that step and put automation to work. Measure - as Net-Results will do for you - to gauge your success and iterate based on need.

What many customers end up with are multiple mini-workflows, each designed to address a specific leak in their funnel. These workflows may well work in series or independently…

- While a Net-Results prospect in Free Trial is “nurtured” to get their onboarding scheduled…
- They are also added to a workflow that delivers 14 “quick tips” - one for each day of their free trial - that point out valuable benefits that are easy to access in Net-Results
- They also are added to a workflow that delivers conceptual content - like this guide.

These three (3) workflows operate independently but all are triggered when a prospect begins a free trial of our software. The point is to do your best to control your prospect’s perception of your solution/product/service.

## SO RELAX. AND FOCUS.

Rome wasn’t built in a day. The leaks in your funnel won’t be solved tomorrow. But by tackling them step by prioritized step you can increase your sales velocity and revenue growth by shoring up the leaks in your funnel.

### Further Reading:

A great next step is to download our guide to mapping out your marketing/sales funnel or “customer journey”.

About Infodat:

Infodat has been delivering value based IT and security solutions for over 20 years. We have helped mid and enterprise organizations like Cardinal Health, Chevron, Nationwide Insurance and many others to drive out costs, improve customer experience and to develop ecosystems to support strategic objectives. Our key competencies include:

- **Microsoft Gold Partner** - Dynamics CRM, Sharepoint, SQL Server, .NET and mobile apps, Azure, etc.
- **Data and Analytics** – Hadoop, Power BI, Datameer, Qlik, data consolidation and cleansing, etc.
- **Security Solutions** – Regulatory compliance, 100% Malware protection, threat management, etc.
- **Application Modernization –** DevOps, API development, Green screen to modern UI, etc.

About Net-Results:

Net-Results is the 1st choice of people buying marketing automation for the 2nd time. Providing unparalleled flexibility to data-driven marketing teams, Net-Results empowers organizations to identify and address bottlenecks in their marketing and sales pipelines. With the aid of automation and at any scale, Net-Results helps companies increase sales velocity and revenue growth.

Net-Results' platform features including lead nurturing and scoring, drip email marketing, funnel analytics, seamless integration with major CRM platforms, and drag & drop tools for creating emails, landing pages, forms and campaigns.

Some data from *“[The Ultimate Marketing Automation Statistics Overview](#)”*...

- ➔ There are nearly 11 times more B2B organizations using marketing automation now than in 2011. – *SiriusDecisions “B-to-B Marketing Automation Study” (2014)*
- ➔ Nearly two-thirds (63%) of the “Very successful” use their marketing automation systems extensively, while more than a third (37%) achieved best-in-class status with limited use. – *Three Deep & Ascend2 “Marketing Automation Trends for Success” (2016)*
- ➔ Best-in-Class companies are 67% more likely to use a marketing automation platform. – *Aberdeen Group “State of Marketing Automation 2014: Processes that Produce” (2014)*

Blowfish Group – Accelerating Revenue Growth – www.blowfishgroup.com